

In June Zola returned to Me"dan, and throughout that year and indeed until August, 1887, one finds Mm busy with this book from which he turned only for a short time in February and April to attend to the production, first of a dramatic version of " Le Ventre de Paris," <sup>1</sup> which had at least a *succes de curiosité* and secondly of a play called " Rene"e " — based on " La Curfe " — which proved a resounding failure and was attended by an acrimonious controversy in the press. In the opinion of the critics, apparently, Bacine's "Phsedra" sufficed for all time, and the idea of a modern one in the person of " Rene"e" was monstrous : thus Zola sinned both against the great classic writer and against modern society.<sup>2</sup>

While he was dividing his attention between those plays and Ms novel " La Terre," [France was becoming more and more absorbed in political questions. General Boulanger, who had been Minister of War in the Freycinet administration of 1886 had lost that position, but his popularity remained extreme, fanned as it was by a large party of malcontents of various political schools. Many were actuated solely by patriotic considerations, for there had been trouble with Germany over an Alsatian frontier incident known historically as the Schnsebele' Affair. Some people who

<sup>1</sup> "Le Yentre de Paris," five acts, by E. Zola and W. Busnach, first performed at the Theatre de Paris, February 25, 1887. It differed considerably from Zola's novel with the same title. Sarcey slated it in "Le Temps" and Zola answered him in "Le Figaro," March 3, 1887.

<sup>a</sup> "Ren6e," five acts, by E. Zola, first performed at the Vaudeville April 16, 1887. One may add that in the latter part of 1887 two plays based on tales by Zola were given in Paris: The first was " Jacques Damour," one act, by Ldon Hemique, Odeon, September 22, and the second, "Tout pour l' Honneur," adapted from " Le Capitaine .Burle," one act, by Henri Cdard, Theatre Libre, December, 1887; performed also at the Theltre Moliere, Brussels, in 1888.